

Castro's Speech to Women's Conference

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The following is a translation of the complete text of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro's speech of January 16, 1963 to the Congress of American Women assembled in Havana. Delivered on the same day as Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchov spoke before the East German Communist Party congress in Berlin, Castro's speech has been widely interpreted as a declaration of sympathy for the Chinese position in the Moscow-Peking dispute.



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Discussing some of the problems of the implementation of the national health plan now in operation in Cuba. Prior to the revolution women were discriminated against in the medical profession. "At this moment," Castro said to the delegates to the Havana conference, "in the first course of the School of Medicine, women account for 50% of the total enrolment."

Castro's Speech to Women's Conference

(followed by: **Castro Comments on the Fight for Peace**)

(Published by Workers' Vanguard and later as a pamphlet widely distributed by the L.S.A., Toronto, February 1963 – see cover page with photo of Fidel Castro and a leading companera among whom was Elena Gill, in charge of a youth school training revolutionary instructors – Ed.)

The following is a translation of the complete text of Cuban Premier Fidel Castro's speech of January 16, 1963 to the Congress of American Women assembled in Havana. Delivered on the same day that Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchov spoke before the East German Communist Party congress in Berlin, Castro's speech has been widely interpreted as a declaration of sympathy for the Chinese position in the Moscow-Peking dispute *(the then public polemic between the Russian and Chinese Stalinist bureaucracies in which China challenged Russia's primacy among world "workers' states" with a somewhat more militant stance against world imperialism –Ed.)*.

Castro:

Women of America, fraternal delegates from the countries of Europe, Asia and Africa who are visiting us –

In the first place I would like to say — I have already said it to some of the executive of the congress — that if this affair began a little late, it was not my fault (laughter), because this year is the "Year of Organization" (laughter). I was in the theatre at three minutes before nine (laughter and applause). We have a duty in this Year of Organization to be punctual; what happened was that the companeras of the congress had a great deal to discuss. I believe that they were discussing until seven or eight, more or less. Until eight and then some, they say (shouts and laughter), and for that reason this function started a little late. I simply state that it was not my fault.

It has been a very great honour for us, for our country, that Cuba was chosen for this congress. In our opinion it has been a very positive and serious event.

We have endeavored to be informed, to read the many reports presented to the congress. Our impression is that they are all very valuable for their seriousness, for the business-like approach to problems, for the enormous amount of data on the true situation in our continent.

Naturally, the subjects dealt with by the congress were limited to those questions which are related to the interests of women. But really! What is there that does not concern women in modern society? What is there that does not concern Latin American women and American women* regarding our social problem? (*American is used in Cuba as elsewhere in Latin America to indicate South as well as North America)

When we discuss the rights and aspirations of women, we see that we cannot have equality for women, nor justice for children nor rights for mothers and wives, if there is no revolution

(applause). Within the world in which American women live, women must, of necessity, be revolutionary (applause).

Why must they be revolutionary? Because women constitute an essential part of each community. They are in the first place exploited workers, and as women are discriminated against.

And who are the revolutionists in human society? Who were they down through the ages? The most exploited, those who are discriminated against. Not only is a woman exploited as a worker when she works for a monopoly exploiter in an exploiting society; she is the most exploited worker, with the lowest wages, the poorest working conditions. She is the object of contradictions between her social function as a woman and the exploitation to which she is exposed.

For this reason, women logically are revolutionists. For this reason, women in our country are revolutionists (applause): because in our country a great number of women were exploited workers, exploited in order to enrich one class. Besides, they were discriminated against by other workers: many women did not even have the opportunity to work.

Companera Vilma has reported on activities which Cuban women have engaged in since the Revolution and on the benefits which they have received from the Revolution. The report was long, but even so it is possible that there were omissions in the report because the Revolution has done even more for the women. Not everything has been done that needs to be done, but we intend to keep struggling for the women.

Women are no longer discriminated against in our country, nor are Negroes. The Revolution has great significance for the Cuban women.

Within the Revolution, the Revolutionary Government is making every effort to open up more and more opportunities for women. For example, after nationalizing the middle and large businesses which sell shoes, clothing and hardware, the Minister of Domestic Trade was directed to select women as administrators for these businesses (applause). Some 4,000 administrators were selected for 4,000 centers of which 90% or more were women (applause).

No Discrimination Against Women

There is another fact, for example, which would not appear in the report of the President of the Federation of Women; a very well illustrated fact with regard to the increased participation of women in activities which were, for all practical purposes, forbidden to them before. In some professions like medicine, the number of women that entered this university faculty did not amount to 10% of the total enrollment. At this moment, in the Institute of Basic Medical Sciences, that is to say the first course of the School of Medicine, women account for 50% of the total enrollment (applause).

These facts demonstrate how, in four years of Revolution, women are being incorporated into our social life, the life of their society, the life of their country, their environment.

Women also paraded together with our soldiers on the 2nd of January, contingents of military battalions of women; and in our army there are special areas where women work and lend their services.

The bourgeois concepts of women, the stigmatized concepts and concepts of discrimination, are disappearing from Cuban society, and the masses of women are aware of this fact. Prejudice is substituted by a new concept in which women are valued for their social activities, in some of which they are demonstrating exceptional ability. A wide field of activities has been opened up to them.

If you compare the information of the Cuban delegation with the information of the Latin American delegation, you will see great differences. For example, here (in Cuba) we are working on the problem of freeing women from domestic slavery, of creating conditions where it will be possible for them to become active in the production process, conditions where women gain, and the Revolution gains.

Within capitalist society, unemployment for millions of men inevitably results in the tendency to relegate women to limited economic activity. In a society such as ours, with the full development of all the resources of the nation and the planning of the economy, more and more hands are necessary for production. It is logical that the Revolution is preoccupied with creating these conditions: today the Revolution is establishing the greatest number of nurseries, school cafeterias, and creating conditions which free the women from the slavery of the kitchen (applause), such as the establishing of laundries.

It is obvious that the peak development of such institutions as nurseries, in certain circumstances, is limited by the resources at our disposal. This year emphasis is being placed on establishing workers' cafeterias in the principal factories of the country. Next year we will concentrate on establishing school cafeterias (applause).

The development of these institutions will permit women to become more active in production and in the life of their country; not only in economic activities but also political and social activities (applause).

Need Latin American Revolution

Our country concerns itself with these problems today because women are in positions of power, thus enabling them to seek solutions to these problems.

The Cuban delegate has also spoken of the gigantic effort which the Revolution has made in the field of education. It is hardly necessary to speak about this; it is enough to see and feel the power of this movement, a movement which has a great future in this country, a movement which brings to life the pledges of the Revolution, above all, the pledges for the future, by multiplying the number of children in the schools, by increasing the number of students in high school and university and by eradicating illiteracy; thereby permitting this country to forge ahead with the strength of magnificent youth called to inherit the conditions created by the Revolution.

Our problem is no longer how to win the right to do all this, but rather how best to do it.

There is a difference in the situation facing the women of America today — represented at this Congress — and the situation facing the women of Cuba. The difference is that the Cuban women now have the opportunity to solve their problems but the women of America do not yet have the opportunity.

Our problems are different in that now it is not a question of opportunity but of how best to proceed. Now it is not a question of opportunity for some 100,000 young students with scholarships from the state, but a question of how best to organize them, how best to arrange for the most efficient schools. I do not mean that we no longer have much work to do, on the contrary: in the Revolution one has more and more work all the time.

The needs of the Revolution are being satisfied as they appear. For example, in the past few days close to 10,000 young campesinas (farm girls) arrived in the capital from Oriente province. Who would take charge of looking after these girls? In the past the Federation of Women have been in the fore in this work but they were responsible for the lodgings of the scholarship students; they did not have sufficient staff.

There was, however, a School for Teachers organized with a select group of young brigadistas (voluntary teachers), who had participated in the great campaign of alphabetization (*abolishing illiteracy--ed.*) in 1961, a school of 1,100 young people who were studying to be teachers. Companera Elena Gill, who is in charge of that school, is a great teacher because she knows how to educate (applause). She began with a group of 300 revolutionary instructors (applause), with 300 teachers taken from the nucleus of young people who volunteered to teach in the mountains — and began to train 300 revolutionary instructors for the night schools for girls who work in domestic service (applause).

That was the first school, but these 300 girls soon grew to 600 and with the help of these young people the Makarenko Pedagogic Institute was formed, an institute of 1,100 young people. Three hundred of this group were selected for special courses and with those 300 and the rest of the girls the problem of organizing the 10,000 campesinas from Oriente province was taken care of (applause).

Now we had the teachers: they were girls who had been alphabetizers, girls who had already studied a year, girls who already had some discipline, a sense of responsibility. It was an impressive sight to cross one of those avenues, where formerly the millionaires lived, and see groups of girls in their uniforms; farm girls who were going from one place to another, possibly to eat or to some class. And with them went, in her scholarship uniform, a girl, in some cases younger than the campesinas themselves; but she was the leader of the group, in charge of the house where they lived and was, besides, their teacher. They work and they study, and imagine how those girls will develop as a result of this responsibility, now that they are assigned serious tasks, now that they work methodically, combining studies with work.

Now we must organize another school for teachers, as well as a school of higher education; the Revolution has changed the course of instruction for teachers. Before, the teachers were

picked exclusively from the cities, but the Revolution has changed this procedure, establishing a system which gives opportunities to all the girls and boys who wish to become teachers. This program begins in the mountains (applause).

We have in the mountains, at this moment, 5,000 young people who are starting their first year of studies to be teachers. Afterwards they will go to a school where they will study for two years and after this they will go to a school of higher education where they will study for another two years. Many of these teachers will come from campesino families, girls who have intimate knowledge of the mountains and the countryside.

We are also preparing accelerated courses for farm girls who are in 4th and 5th grade and who wish to be teachers. Of some 10,000 campesinas, we will select those with the most ability and send them to these schools.

Eventually we will have our Upper School Teachers Institute with 6,000, students, students who will teach while they are studying (applause).

This program is being realized with a determined group of people working in this field. Are there many competent people for this task? No, unfortunately, there are not many, but wherever there is a competent person in charge of any of these activities the work proceeds in a methodical manner.

We do not have many Elenas, but in the future we will have hundreds of them because many girls are being educated by her (applause). Every day there will be more schools and we will need more teachers to organize and direct these schools.

Thus the Revolution advances with its youth—it can do it. We now have the opportunity to begin. The fraternal delegates from Latin America have presented a true picture of the situation on the continent—it is truly dreadful. We believe that all those reports should be published in a pamphlet and distributed here and in Latin America.

They are the figures of oppression; the data concerning the number of children without schools, without teachers, undernourished; those painful figures of the small number of children who ever reach sixth grade, of the small percentage who go to high school and to university.

The relative figures on infant mortality, resulting from the unsanitary conditions under which they live, the malnutrition, the lack of medical programs. These are not conditions which exist in Cuba today because today not a single child is left an invalid as a result of poliomyelitis (applause). Tens of thousands of children have been saved as a result of medical assistance, and we continue to develop more and more public health programs on a national scale. The number of beds in our hospitals have almost tripled; the resources allotted to public health have quintupled.

Today these are not our problems but the problems of a whole continent. Our problem is how to produce all that we need in order to overcome the poverty left us by imperialist exploitation. That is our problem.

Peaceful Transition and Fight for Peace

Great is our work, arduous, hard and difficult, and it is made more difficult with the tentacles of imperialism over us, with the incessant hostility of the most powerful and aggressive, imperialist nation in the world. Our problem is how best to advance this work; how to defend the Revolution and the sovereignty of this country and at the same time continue forward; that is our problem and not yours, women of America.

Your problem, and that of the people you represent, is how to create the opportunities for doing what we are doing (applause). We are sure that we will be victorious. Sooner or later, we are sure that we will overcome our difficulties with more or less sacrifice. We are sure that imperialism will not be able to defeat us (applause), because in this country there will never be a conquered people. There could be fallen or dead people but not conquered people (applause).

If, one day, the Yankee imperialists, making use of all their strength and resources, decide to destroy us, the most they will be able to say is: "We have destroyed them, but we have not defeated them" (applause).

This is how we Cubans think. The problem, I repeat, for us today, is to work and struggle. Your problem (in Latin America) is to struggle in order to work afterward (applause). The statistics are there, those cold terrible figures, those figures which UNESCO or FAO, or whatever other organizations of the U.N. produces statistics. These statistics say so many millions dead from hunger, from sickness, or so many million children without schools; so many million families without houses or so many million malnutrition cases. They give a life expectancy in the exploited countries half that of the life expectancy in the highly industrialized countries. The figures are there and they include the number dead; more than the casualties of any revolution (applause).

The number of people who die annually in Latin America, of those who die in a year from hunger and sickness without assistance, are more than those who would die freeing the people of Latin America (applause). Here, the struggle cost 20,000 lives but already has saved many times this number (applause).

We can wait and they will keep piling up the statistics; millions of unhappy, exploited, dying; the figures are there, as a result of the feudal exploitation, of the imperialist exploitation. The problem should not be confined to the manipulation of figures or reproducing the figures on pictures or on graphs and in pamphlets: we must be thinking about how to change the situation (applause).

There are statistical experts but what we need are experts in changing the situation, expert in leading the people towards revolution (applause). That is the art of the revolutionists, the art which must be learned and must be developed — how to lead the masses into struggle! — because it is the masses who make history. But in order to make history we must lead the masses in struggle (applause).

This is the duty of the leaders of revolutionary organizations; to lead the masses along, to launch the masses into struggle (applause). That was what they did in Algeria (applause), and that is what the patriots are doing in South Viet Nam (applause). They have launched the masses forward into struggle with the correct methods, the correct tactics and they have won the greatest number possible to the struggle. And that is what we did, for power was not won by the four, or five, or six, or seven of us who one day were scattered here, but rather by the action of the masses unleashed by the struggle against the tyranny which culminated in the people's victory.

With regard to these questions there is a concept that we wish to clarify. There have been some vulgar theoreticians who have affirmed that Cuba made a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism. This is to deny that in this country an army, rising out of the bowels of the people, routed a modern army, armed and instructed by Yankee Imperialism (applause). It is to deny that explosives and incendiary bombs fell upon our campesinos, upon our cities and upon our towns with "Made In U.S.A." signs on them. It is to deny the formidable struggle of our people; it is to deny **Playa Giron** (*location of the abortive invasion of Cuba at "Bay of Pigs" -- ed.*) and those who fell there (applause).

It was not a peaceful transition but a transition of struggle, without which our country would not have made the transition. Without that heroic struggle, without the armed struggle of the Cuban people we would still, perhaps, have Sr. Batista with us "Made in U.S.A."

These are historic truths and we believe that at least on these historic truths we have the right to speak, and not have some theoretician from a distance tell us what happened here without having come here.

We must not blush when we say these things, nor must we say them in a low voice. It is necessary to speak loudly, in a way that will be heard, so that the truth will be heard (applause); so that the people will hear, because those false interpretations of history tend to create that conformity which suits imperialism. They tend to create resignation, to create reformism and a policy of waiting for the Revolution.

These false interpretations of history do not fit in with the situation in the immense majority of Latin American countries, where the objective conditions exist and the imperialists certainly see it clearly enough. The objective conditions exist but the subjective factor is lacking.

The subjective conditions must be created and can only be created by objective truth and not by falsifying history. The subjective conditions will not be created by saying that a peaceful transition was made in a beatific way.

Await First Peaceful Transition

We are not dealing with cowards, but rather with people who are confused. We do not deny the possibility of a peaceful transition but we are still waiting for the first case — we do not say that it can't happen because we are not dogmatic.

We understand the continuous change in historic conditions and circumstances. We do not

deny the possibility, but what we are saying is that here (in Cuba) we have not made a peaceful transition. What we protest is the use, by some, of the case of Cuba in order to confuse the revolutionists of other countries where objective conditions exist for the success of the Revolution and where they can do the same as we did here in Cuba (applause).

That the imperialist theoreticians are preoccupied with preventing revolutions is understandable, and that the imperialist theoreticians are forced to lie about the Cuban Revolution in order to trick and to falsify it, to say the most horrible things about it, to create fear in the minds of the people about revolutions, this is also understandable. But no one from a revolutionary position should try to create conformity or fear of revolutions — that is absurd. Let the theoreticians of imperialism preach conformity but let the theoreticians of revolution fearlessly preach revolution! (applause).

That is what we believe: that is what we said in the Second Declaration of Havana, a declaration that some revolutionary organizations in some brother countries received with honors, "the honor of the drawer," when it should have received the wide publication that it deserved. It is just as if we filed everything that you have discussed here: naturally if we don't want the masses to know then it should be filed. But if we tell the masses the true situation then we must also show them the way. We must lead them to the struggle because that road is much easier in many countries in Latin America than it was in Cuba.

We are not making irresponsible generalizations, nor do we wish to violate theory. We know that each country has specific problems and for that reason we do not generalize, but we say 'the majority.' We know that there are exceptions, we know that there are countries where the objective conditions do not exist, but in the majority of Latin American countries they do exist. That is our opinion.

It is our duty to say it here because we have reason to hope that within the next forty years we will not meet again as now, the granddaughters of our delegation with the granddaughters of your delegation, discussing the same problems (applause).

On Peaceful Coexistence with the US

Our country faces difficult circumstances and great risks. We must not, like an ostrich, dig our heads in the soil, but we must see things as they are — we are going through a stage of great risks and great dangers. We have on the one side Yankee imperialism, the most aggressive power, the most powerful imperialism, which has schemed, as a fundamental proposition, to destroy this Revolution. We have on the other side circumstances which are adverse and unfavorable to the world revolutionary movement.

For us, the Caribbean crisis has not been solved (applause). In our opinion, in the opinion of the revolutionary leadership of our country, a war has been avoided but peace has not been attained. They are not the same.

Is it possible that circumstances did not justify the actions and the steps that we took? Is it not possible that the declared policy of hostility and aggression against our country by Yankee

imperialism does not exist? We have no confidence in the promises of Kennedy, but even so Kennedy has not given his word (not to invade).

That is why we said that there were no satisfactory guarantees without the Five Points* which we established right after the crisis (applause).

*(1) The end of attempts to strangle Cuba economically; (2) The end of espionage, sabotage and counter-revolution organized by the U.S.; (3) The end of pirate attacks; (4) The end of violations of Cuban air space and coastal waters; (5) Withdrawal of U.S. forces from the base at Guantanamo.

We must be very clear about certain matters which are somewhat confusing and subtle. If it is said that we are here because of the solidarity of the Socialist Camp, then it is the truth (applause); but if it is said that we are here because of the promises of Kennedy, then it is not the truth. We have resisted for four years, thanks to that solidarity. Now then, what does peace mean for us?

What peace is there for us? Since Kennedy spoke in the Orange Bowl, the agents of imperialism have committed four assassinations. They assassinated a **campesino** scholarship student while he was on vacation in Trinidad. They assassinated a worker from the province of Las Villas — burning him alive — a worker who worked in the re-forestation project, and they assassinated two **compañeros** of COR in the province of Matanzas. Yankee agents with Yankee arms, following Yankee orders, are carrying out the policy of subversion announced by the imperialists.

What we are saying is this: how can there be a solution if the imperialists continue to take upon themselves the right to strangle our country by hunger, to isolate our country, to pressure all the airlines and all the steamship lines to deprive us of raw materials and to create hunger in our country. How can there be a solution while the imperialists assume the right to blockade us, thereby creating unimaginable problems for us, without respect for international law or the principles on which the United Nations was founded.

How can there be a solution if the imperialists claim the right to subvert the social order, to introduce arms and saboteurs, to train and organize mercenaries, if the imperialists take the right to violate our waters and our air space and to organize bands of pirates, if the imperialists take the right to occupy part of our territory.

What right have the imperialists got to demand that friendly arms be withdrawn while they maintain enemy arms on the territory of the Cuban homeland (Guantanamo) — arms for aggression? (applause) What right do the imperialists have to do that?

In three declarations since the crisis, Mr. Kennedy spoke in reticent terms, threatening, maintaining a policy of economic, political, and other types of pressure against Cuba, promising not to invade if we would promise no subversion.

But for Kennedy, this congress is subversive — we can't win. This Congress of Women here, that speaks of hunger and the frightful misery of Latin America, this is subversion (to Kennedy).

When he spoke to the mercenaries in the Orange Bowl he said that he would give back the mercenary flag in Havana. Mr. Rusk — the Yankee secretary of state — speaking recently said that the United States had made no commitment not to invade Cuba, that if they had made such a commitment they had done so only in connection with the immediate situation and independently of their commitments to the other countries of Latin America; that's what he said.

Where is the commitment not to invade our country? It is insolent of the Yankee secretary of state to say that they have made no commitment not to invade Cuba. Do not the international laws, the Charter of the United Nations, and all the norms which govern relations between nations; do not these bind the U.S. not to invade our country? Of course! They do not have the right to invade us!

By speaking in this manner, even more than failing to commit themselves not to invade, they have relinquished the obligation they have to uphold International Right. Those who hold the Yankee reins of government betray, besides, the souls of gangsters and pirates (applause).

The imperialists are somewhat optimistic as reflected in their appraisals, but I don't think there is any reason for this optimism except their underestimation of the realities of the world and their underestimation of the power of the people.

It is quite clear that they do not want a finger moved in Latin America — they do not want the people to struggle. For instance, the example of the heroic people of Venezuela is a terrible nightmare for them. They are supposed to quietly submit to the establishment of an extended empire in their country, to a base of exploitation more inhuman than before. All the imperialist programs presuppose more privations for the workers and more sacrifices for the masses.

Castro Comments on the Fight for Peace

It is clear to everyone that the Alliance for Progress will not succeed, because it is nothing but a program of exploitation, of power and of retrogression, because those associated with the "Alliance" are such types as Stroessner, Guido, Romulo Betancourt, the Somozas, and the Junta of "gorillas" in Peru. These are the "progressives."

It is with these "progressives" that Yankee imperialism is allied — the most reactionary and most antediluvian forces in Latin America. It will not work — it is doomed to failure. It is a desperate intent on the part of imperialism to mislead and confuse.

In one of his speeches, Mr. Kennedy asked us to compare Cuba with the Alliance for Progress. In any comparison, Mr. Kennedy is the loser, because here — in spite of all the imperialist propaganda — it is a fact that every child is guaranteed a litre (approx. 1 qt.) of milk daily (applause). We have had to ration because employment increased extraordinarily — close to 500,000 people were put to work and now they have paycheques, the **campesinos** were freed from rent payments, house rents were reduced 50%, education was made free, hospital services were increased five times, the resources of the people were increased immeasurably.

It was to be expected that, given this situation, we would adopt measures which guaranteed that the articles which everyone needed would be available to all at a fair price. There are still enough rich people to create speculation in the market.

Given a similar situation (scarcities) in the capitalist countries, prices of scarce goods would rise: a litre of milk would sell for 2 pesos, a pound of rice for 3 pesos and a pound of meat for 5 pesos. There would be no rationing, true, but there would be something worse — the people with money would get everything. Our enemies try to confuse us with all these things.

Our country faces a difficult situation as a result of two factors. First, we are the immediate and fundamental target of imperialism and second, the divisions or discrepancies, or whatever you like to call them, more or less optimistically, within the Socialist camp.

We have stated our position but we do not intend to throw wood on the fire of these differences. I believe that whoever does this goes against the interests of the world revolutionary movement (applause).

Faced as we are with imperialism, this is a hard and bitter reality. We have stated our position, as we understand it, as is our duty, not in order to fan the differences but to struggle for unity in the Socialist camp (applause), unity based on principles, unity based on principles! and to struggle for that unity with Marxist-Leninist methods (applause).

Marxism-Leninism is sufficiently rich in ideological wealth and experience to provide answers to these questions, these difficulties — the question is how best to present the problem. I believe that we should struggle for unity but we should make known our own judgments. Chauvinistic? No!!! Marxist-Leninist!!! (applause). Imperialism is still with us, dangerous and aggressive, and the underdeveloped world is still with us. The liberation movements are still with us — they are struggling in Angola, in Vietnam, in Latin America and in all parts of the world — and that struggle needs the united forces of the Socialist camp (applause).

It is most unfortunate that these difficulties have arisen, but being faced with them we must fight them, because our first task is to unite. Marx said "Proletarians of all Countries, Unite!" (applause).

Marx and Engels struggled incessantly and tirelessly all their lives for that unity; that is what the political leadership of our Party and our people say, "Proletarians of all Countries, Unite!" (applause), unite in the face of the class enemy, in the face of the imperialist enemy, the oppressors, the war-mongers!!!

It is this position of our party, of our people — this judgment of our national leadership and our people — that has moved us forward, united, in difficult moments and in difficult circumstances. Our people were subjected to great tests during the crisis — tests requiring valor in the face of the Kennedy menace. We faced the possibility of being turned into an atomic target, but the nerves of our people were more steady than the nerves of the Generals of the Yankee Pentagon!

There was no lack of isolated voices of criticism — they were not lacking as was to be expected. Some who were honestly confused, and some not so honestly, criticized the national leadership of ORI (Integrated Revolutionary Organization) right after the crisis over the inspection issue and the pirate flights over Cuba. These people seemed to think that we should have allowed ourselves to be inspected, as if to consecrate the right of the imperialists to say what arms we may or may not have, and to return our country to the period of the Platt Amendment when the United States Government decided things for us.

To have accepted inspection would have meant to agree that we must render accounts to the Yankee imperialists of the arms we can or cannot have on our territory. For us this involved a question of principle. It would have been equivalent to renouncing our sovereignty, of accepting the subjection of this country before all the other states in the world. We did not, and we will not, accept that! (applause).

Those who think that we can accept that, also think that our enemies can land without our firing a shot, because that is the way they come to these conclusions. That is not the way the Revolution came to power and that is not the way the Revolution was defended at Playa Giron (*the aborted US-sponsored invasion of mercenaries at Bay of Pigs – Ed.*). By standing firm, by being willing to fight in the face of imperialism, that is how we defend our Revolution.

Certain individuals thought we should let the Yankee planes fly over and "buzz" our anti-aircraft guns without our giving the order to fire. Such a reaction should never be expected of us: what the enemy must expect each time he attacks is a fight, and not a compromise (applause and shouts of "Fidel for sure, give the Yankees a hard time." This rhymes in Spanish—translator).

There will always be people who say, people who insinuate, that we were opposed to a policy of peace. The answer is the same now as then — we want peace, but with justice, with sovereignty and dignity (applause). We want peace, but not at the price of renouncing our role as revolutionists, not by renouncing the Revolution!

When we fought the invaders at Playa Giron, those who bombarded us, those who attacked us, no one doubted that we were defending the peace. When our people organized themselves to fight to the last man and woman in the face of the imperialist attack, no one doubted that we were defending the peace, because the resistance to aggression is the struggle for peace. Surrender to the aggressor is the road to war or the subjugation, of peoples. When we defend our sovereignty and our rights, we are defending peace.

And when we tell the Latin Americans (that the objective conditions exist for revolution we are defending the peace, because the more imperialism is weakened the less danger there is of war. The more imperialism is weakened the less aggressive it will be. The liberation movements of the people weaken imperialism and make it less aggressive, less dangerous. The struggle of the peoples for their sovereignty and independence is the struggle for peace.

Yes, we consider peace to be the fundamental objective of humanity. We struggle for it along the road of national sovereignty and national liberation, in the face of the exploiters, in the face of imperialism, by fighting against imperialist exploitation we are struggling for peace

(applause).

We are the enemies of war; wars are imposed on humanity by the imperialists. The stronger they (the imperialists) feel, the more dangerous they will be. For that reason, every people that struggles for its sovereignty and for its independence, defends peace.

In this we Cuban Revolutionaries are united. Those who think they are going to take advantage of us are wrong: those who believe that in the face of the desire for unity, courage and dignity of our people, that they can opportunistically create confusion by casting doubt on the integrity of the Cuban Revolutionary leadership, they are sadly mistaken. This shows that they do not know our people, that they do not know the quality of our people.

Those who take advantage of the difficulties through which we are passing foment division and commit grave treachery against our Revolution. We will encounter the plotters and the divisionists and we will have confidence in our party and the direction that will be given by the Revolutionary leadership. The people will say, this is our opinion, it is the direction given by the leaders and we have confidence in it (applause).

That will be the conduct of our people, the conduct of our revolutionary militants who do not become discouraged, who are not afraid of the struggle, who are not afraid of difficult circumstances no matter what they are. There will be no divisions here; there will be unity here because it is necessary, because we have the imperialist enemy on our doorstep waiting to destroy us. We need unity in order to resist, we need unity in order to win, we need unity more than ever to go forward. With our unity, our courage and our program we will march forward, facing up to difficulties; facing up to inconveniences, whatever they may be.

We will exercise the right to do our own thinking but we will be consistent with our revolutionary orientation. Above all else our thinking says — resist the imperialist enemy, combat the imperialist enemy in every way, march forward without retreating, without vacillation in the revolutionary ranks! Forward against Imperialism!

Imperialism has been and always will be our enemy and the enemy of Latin America.

We will continue along the revolutionary road to socialism, the road of Marxism-Leninism.

Patria o Muerte, Venceremos (ovation)